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Edited by Frances Stephens

**February, 1946**

**A**T a luncheon given by the governors of the Stratford Memorial Theatre, on January 21st, at the Savoy, encouraging plans for this year's Festival were made known. The chairman, Lord Iliffe, stressed the new approach that would be fostered as to Stratford's place in the future cultural life of the nation. It was realised, he said, that Stratford was no longer a local affair, but was a national, if not an international institution. Lt.-Col. Fordham Flower, chairman of the council, was unfortunately absent through influenza, but in the course of his speech, read by his sister Mrs. Lloyd, he said it was his desire to make Stratford the world-centre of the finest Shakespearean acting, and that he wanted the existing charter broadened so that eminent men in the world of letters, music and art, might be admitted as governors.

Sir Barry Jackson, who is to be director of the Festival for the next two seasons, and who will be given wider powers than the director has previously possessed, elaborated his plans for Stratford. While he will not introduce any revolutionary changes in the way of modern-dress productions, etc., certain new methods would be adopted, chief among them that each play would have a different producer. For the non-Shakespearean play (usually 18th century), Sir Barry favoured the choice of playwrights contemporary with Shakespeare, and had this year selected Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus*.

Among other schemes Sir Barry has in mind, is the re-opening of the old Stratford theatre after conversion into an Elizabethan playhouse, where outstanding amateur companies and school productions might be invited to perform.

## Over the Footlights

The plays this year will be *The Tempest* (opening April 20th); *Cymbeline* (the birthday play on April 23rd); *Love's Labour Lost* (April 26th); *Macbeth* (May 10th); *As You Like It* (May 31st); *Henry V* (June 21st); *Dr. Faustus* (July 12th); and *Measure for Measure* (August 23rd). The respective producers are: Eric Crozier, Nugent Monck, Peter Brook, Michael MacOwan, Herbert Prentice, Dorothy Green, George Rylands, and Frank MacMullan (who is attached to the drama department at Yale, and is coming over to produce *Measure for Measure*). Robert Harris, Valerie Taylor, Mark Dignam, Robert Vernon, David King-Wood, Ruth Lodge, Julian Somers, Richard Littledale and Paul Scofield are the leading players. Leonard Crainford is the new general manager. Invitations have been received for the company to visit America, South Africa, Australia and the Soviet Union.

Practical evidence of the desire of those interested in the theatre in this country and the U.S.S.R. for a real interchange is the interesting Soviet Theatre Exhibition at Dorland Hall, which was opened on January 22nd by Madame Gusev, wife of H. E. the Soviet Ambassador. This most delightful exhibition is organised by the Theatre Section of the Society for Cultural Relations with the U.S.S.R., under the Presidency of Dame Edith Evans.

The great part of the exhibits of this unique exhibition, the first of its kind, has been specially flown from Moscow, and includes some exquisite models of stage sets and stage costumes representing theatre activities all over the Soviet Union. The walls are bright with original colour designs for stage settings and photographs of actual stage and ballet productions.

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Edward Mandintan

Harlequin presents the heart to Cinderella. The charming ballet from *The Glass Slipper*, at the St. James's, showing *L. to R.*: Annette Chappell (Columbine), Sara Gregory (Cinderella), Helen Cherry (Fairy Godmother), Michael Anthony (Prince Charming), Frank Staff (Harlequin), and The Three Graces:— Sara Luzita (Beauty), Ann Lascelles (Truth), Elisabeth Schooling (Love). Incidentally, for the first time in the history of *Cinderella* a plastic shoe is used at the St. James's Theatre. Usually a white satin Court shoe is used for the slipper.

## New Shows of the Month

"*The Glass Slipper*"—St. James's, December 20th.

"*Aladdin*"—Cambridge, December 21st.

"*Cinderella*"—Adelphi, December 24th.

"*The Shadow Factory*"—Mercury, December 19th.

The Rock Theatre Company — Rudolf Steiner Theatre.

"*Death of a Rat*"—Lyric, Hammersmith, January 16th.

### "The Glass Slipper"

ROBERT Donat's production of this charming Herbert and Eleanor Farjeon fairy play, telling the story of Cinderella without the usual trappings of pantomime and knockabout comedy, is a revival of crystal prettiness. Sara Gregory is a new recruit as Cinderella and she plays the part and sings the songs with spontaneous sweetness. Geoffrey Dunn repeats his witty and loquacious performance as the King's Herald, and Lawrence Hanray in a sympathetic study of Cinderella's father, Elsie French as the Stepmother, the grotesque stepsisters of Joan Sterndale Bennett and

Olga May and the lovely Fairy Godmother of Helen Cherry, who now takes flight like a Taglioni Sylphide, add notably to one's enjoyment. Andree Howard's new ballet interlude (miscalled a Masque) is a poor example of her choreography and inferior to the one staged last year; but her final Harlequinade was excellently danced by the very promising young Ballet Rambert dancer, Annette Chappell, as Columbine, and Rex Reid, deputising for Frank Staff with notably improved ease, grace and finish, as Harlequin. Anne Lascelles, Sara Luzita and Elisabeth Schooling also dance well. Lulu Dukes mimes, as last year, with brilliant humour as the dumb Zany, and Clifton Parker's music, some of it 18th century pastiche, has real distinction. A.W.

### "Cinderella"

A most tasteful drop-curtain, depicting Cinderella's coach in exquisite pastel shades, suggested Jack Hylton's pantomime at the Adelphi would be one of the finest ever seen. Apart from the glittering hoarfrost on the fir trees and the shimmering crinolines at the Ball, our hopes were not



realised. The poor book gave Bud Flanagan little chance to treat us to a memorable performance as Buttons. There were fleeting moments of sentiment and pathos which Mr. Flanagan seized with the hand of a master, but they were all-too-fleeting and all-too-rare. On the other hand, we missed his familiar breeziness in the comedy scenes with the Broker's Men and the Ugly Sisters. To allow Gavin Gordon to play the thankless role of the Baron is a dog-in-the-manger piece of casting. One might as well invite Margot Fonteyn to play a part sitting in a bath-chair all evening. Few singers have a finer voice or an easier stage presence than Mr. Gordon who might at least be allowed to open his mouth. Maybe it is just as well, as the choice of songs was uninspired and one left the theatre without a single melody, either new or old, ringing in the ears.

Clever music-hall acts were inserted without any introduction and still less justification. Maybe their presence persuaded people they were getting value for the money, since they helped to drag out the show to three-and-a-half hours. What relation has a troupe of midgets to this most wonderful fairy story in the world, when they are not even "excused" as entertainers at the Prince's Ball? Good as they were at their job, they simply took possession of the stage and dispelled the fairy-tale atmosphere that should pervade the evening. Lois Green has an enchanting smile, but unless the story-book illustrators have been working under a misconception for the past century, Cinderella would never have chosen so sophisticated a coiffure. Surely she simply combed her beautiful golden tresses over her shoulders and left it at that.

Jean Adrienne's principal boy has all the familiar dash; tiny Angela Glynne serves Mr. Flanagan as an effective new "feed"; the rest of the cast includes Desmond Campbell, Bebe de Roland, Peggy Rawlings, Baker, Dove and Allen, Bobbie Kimber, Marion Dawson, Dudley's Midgets, and Beams' Children.

E.J.

(see also page 33)

## "Aladdin"

**B**INNIE Hale has everything it takes to be the ideal principal boy; charm, versatility, a pleasing voice and a certain 'fey' quality that belongs to true pantomime. There is also in this, Emile Littler's fourth London pantomime, good support from comedians Hal Bryan as an excellent dame, and Jack Stanford as Wishee Washee. The Ganjou Brothers and Juanita, the Tiller girls and Terry children are other bright spots, together with the Agar Young duo as a particularly sprightly horse and Laurie Mellin as an appealing cat.

Miss Hale wears some dazzling costumes and the Princess (Mary Meredith) is most decorative, but though this pantomime is built more on traditional lines than many we have seen of recent years, surely some of the magic has been taken out of this annual entertainment. Perhaps modern audiences prefer the new semi-revue technique, but however clever the turns may be, we grow a little tired, and, childhood memories to the fore, look in vain for the glittering spectacle in which pantomime should abound. Like *Cinderella*, *Aladdin* offers fine scope for elaborate scenic effects, but once again we were disappointed. But perhaps the passing years make us unduly critical; we take our fairy stories more seriously maybe. L.J.

## The Shadow Factory

**T**HE most important movement in the theatre to-day is the talented work at the Mercury towards bringing poetry back into life. More correct would it be to say that the brave achievement of the Mercury and Pilgrim Players is a re-affirmation of the poetic aspect of our common life, work that has to be done anew for every generation. In Flecker's *Hassan*, when the Caliph asked Hassan to imagine a nation whose people have forgotten poetry or whose poets have forgotten the people, Hassan replied that they would be a dark patch upon the world, and the Caliph approved his reply. There are many dark patches on the world to-day.

*The Shadow Factory* by Anne Ridler is a vivid and timely play. If the writing savours of Eliot and the plot of Dickens, I would say so much the better. The important thing is that in the course of the story the characters are continually expressing our secret criticisms of and hopes for our world and easing our spirits thereby.

There is, necessarily, much very beautiful speaking in the play. Mr. Robert Speaight's great gifts of combining speed with dignity and sense with music are continually in requisition. Mr. Donald Morley contrives an illusion of marvellous ordinariness, Mr. Alan Wheatley's performance is delightfully humorous and exciting and Mr. Frank Napier serves the author faithfully with an admirable idealisation of a real clergyman. The production by E. Martin Browne brings innumerable ideas into play with the utmost economy of means and space.

H.G.M.

## The Rudolf Steiner Theatre

**W**HAT high self-esteem and wide general esteem would accrue to any West End theatre management that ventured to revive but one of the four plays that The Rock Theatre Company carries in reper-

(Continued on page 8)



## New Shows of the Month (Continued)

tory? These are *Man and Superman* by Bernard Shaw, *The Father* by August Strindberg, *Tobias and the Angel* by James Bridie and *Atonement* by Edward Thompson. A company that offers such adventures among masterpieces is worthy of much support; more than London was supplying when I had the good fortune to witness their productions of Shaw's and Strindberg's masterpieces. Both these plays demonstrate the secret dominance of the female in human society but, whereas Shaw evokes laughter by his habit of perpetually sacrificing his main theme for a verbal quip, Strindberg rigorously excludes every influence that might relieve the tension and achieves a tragedy sombre and terrifying. The treatment of the plays by the gifted producer, Terence O'Brien, who also plays the key parts, accords with the authors' intentions. *Man and Superman*, beginning as high comedy, passes into something like vaudeville with the introduction of the comic motor-car in Act II. Thence forward, all Mr. O'Brien's virtuosity is required to keep the main argument in sight.

There is very high impressive acting in *The Father*, the tragedy of a genius mated with a thoroughly unsympathetic woman. Unforgettable are the studies of baffled rage by Terence O'Brien, of patient and implacable venom by Ruth Spalding and aged, ivory calm by Nina Gerrard. It is of interest that the Rock Company has evolved from the Oxford Pilgrim Players.

H.G.M.

## "Death of a Rat"

JAN de Hartog, who has intellect in his writing and power to grip, here attempts too much, and though our attention was held for a lot of the time, our mind was constantly jibbing at the number of themes presented and a certain conflict of purpose which seemed to overlay the whole.

The stage is cleverly divided, and only one half at a time is used; the play being a series of flashes back and forward in time. Two scientists are engaged in cancer research in an Amsterdam laboratory, in 1940, while Germany prepares for the coming slaughter. The elder man accidentally pricks his finger during an experiment on a rat and knows his death is imminent. His young companion is disillusioned and uncertain of himself in the face of the impending European holocaust, and talks of throwing up his work, and so, with death hovering over him, the older man tells him his life story, hoping thereby to re-enthuse his partner for his great task of cancer research.

We did not, however, quite see why the second young man should be thus renewed in his purpose, for the story was incon-

clusive. Dr. Wilts, when himself unsettled during the Spanish Civil War by the thought that hundreds were being killed each day senselessly while he was painfully trying to find the cure for one, meets the woman of his fate, a young astronomer, who is dying of tuberculosis. They fall in love. Yolan the girl, who is a mystic, has strange clairvoyant visions and foresees much that will happen in the future in Europe; to her companions, and to the universe as well. When an X-ray proves that her lungs are so riddled with disease that rightly speaking she should have died long ago, Wilts' fellow scientist, Dr. Wonterson, perceives that only love is holding her to this life. He, a confirmed materialist, becomes interested in the possibility of the soul, and with Yolan's co-operation begins an investigation into her "visions." At the same time Wilts and Wonterson are conducting a cancer research experiment on a rat. It looks as though they have alighted on something important, and the fate of this rat is inextricably mixed up with Yolan's fate in too complicated a manner to explain, except at length. The rat dies however, and Wilts to spare Yolan, gives her the fatal kiss and she dies in his arms, the thread of her life broken by the emotional stress. Yolan had foreseen that Wilts would himself die following a telephone ring which would cause him to prick his finger during an experiment, and so, of course, he did, as we know from the opening scene.

As mentioned before, we could not see why this story should necessarily make Wilts' fellow scientist feel that his efforts to save life were all important, even though thousands were to be blown to atoms in a world conflict. However, this is a play of ideas, and all such are to be welcomed in these days.

The author is well served by the cast of four. Pamela Brown in the difficult part of Yolan, manages to convey a rare mysticism, and invests her longest speeches with a meaning not always over-apparent in the author's words. Robert Harris plays Wilts with quiet understanding and Alastair Sim brings humour to his reading of Wonterson, a typical absent-minded professor.

F.S.

A revival of Ibsen's *A Doll's House* took place at the Winter Garden, on January 17th, too late for a review in this issue. The version presented is a new one by Norman Ginsbury. Angela Baddeley appears as Nora, Abraham Sofaer as Krogstad, Oliver Johnston as Rank, John Stuart as Torvald, Diana Graves as Mrs. Linde and Ann Gee as the maid. Noel Willman directs and the decor and costumes are by Molly McArthur.



# Walter Crisham enjoys 'the time of his life'

by ERIC JOHNS

THE boom is playing havoc with the lives of actors. To some it brings stagnation, condemning them to appear night after night in the same play at the same theatre for three or more years at a stretch. To others it brings unemployment, since most West-End theatres are tenanted by firmly established successes, making the possibility of a new first night something to be wondered at. Many artists try-out plays in the provinces, and though meeting with enormous success, they are subsequently compelled to disband in despair, with no hope of a West-End home.

To Walter Crisham the boom has brought *The Time Of Your Life*, and given him the most exciting New Year prospect in his profession. At the moment he is rehearsing the part of Joe, the young loafer with money and a good heart who is the dominating figure of this first Saroyan play to be produced over here. One has only to read

are casually and youthfully worn and give him an almost boyish appearance."

Mr. Crisham has only to step from the Ivy to the theatre, and take his place in Nick's honky-tonk on the San Francisco water-front and we have a piece of casting as miraculous as Bergner's Gemma Jones or Binnie Hale's Nanette. It is a part no one else will dare to tackle after it has been played by him. Eddie Dowling, who created the part in New York just after the outbreak of war, has never seen Mr. Crisham act, but even from knowledge gleaned from newspaper cuttings he feels full justice will be done to his old part, and has sent his blessing for the opening night at the Lyric, Hammersmith, this month.

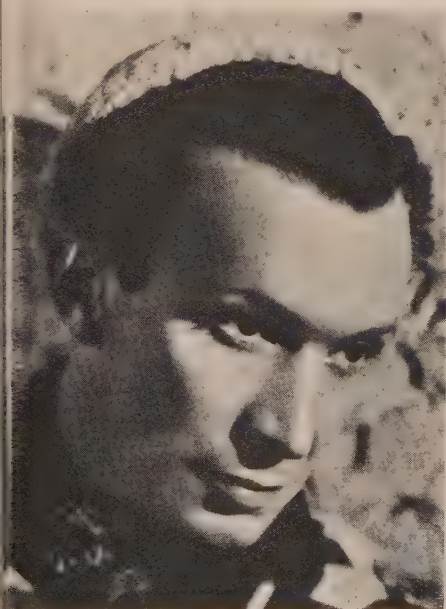
The name Crisham has become a synonym for versatility. He came over here away back in 1932 with a fortnight's engagement to dance at the Palladium. Like the immortal Genee, who danced for three weeks at the old Empire and remained for ten years, this young actor has never been allowed to return to his native America. He was snapped up for the revue, *Ballyhoo*, and we have more recent memories of *Nymph Errant* with Gertrude Lawrence; *Spread It Abroad* with Dorothy Dickson; the Novello shows, *Careless Rapture* and *Crest Of The Wave* at the Lane. Then he perfected his genius for intimate revue in *The Gate Revue*, *Sweet and Low*, *Sky High*, and the *Henson Gaieties*. Those of us who supped in the old days at the Ritz or the Cafe de Paris cherish that last-word touch of sophistication brought to the occasion by his dancing.

Now comes his chance to score in a leading straight play. Except for playing in *Guests At Random*, a fleeting try-out produced by Gwen Farrar at Richmond in 1938, with Zelma O'Neal and Basil Radford in the cast, Mr. Crisham has never appeared in a straight play, so the Saroyan production is an exciting milestone in his career.

All those years in revue taught him to create a character in an instant, with the minimum of make-up and dialogue. Then, just as quickly, it is forgotten, as the scene fades out and he hastily changes costume for something totally different in the next item on the bill. Not a gesture or a syllable is wasted—the impression has to be created vividly and quickly, without any opportunity to build-up to it.

In the Saroyan play the part of Joe will give him a chance to develop character for the first time in his career. He is on the stage practically the entire evening, meeting all the varied types that patronise

(Continued overleaf)



WALTER CRISHAM

who will be appearing with Margaret Johnston and Frederick Valk in *The Time of Your Life*, at the Lyric, Hammersmith.

the author's description of Joe to realise that Walter Crisham was born to play the part. He is "always calm, always quiet, always thinking, always eager, always bored, always superior. His expensive clothes



## Walter Crisham enjoys 'the time of his life' (Continued)

Nick's Saloon, fascinated by their lives and their ambitions. For three years Joe has been trying to find out if it is possible to live what he considers a civilised life—a life that cannot hurt any other life.

Even though Mr. Crisham had to snap in and out of a whole lifetime of moods when he played revue, there is sufficient evidence to prove that he is capable of really serious characterisation when the occasion arises. His delightful "Filthy Postcard" sketch assured us that the young man has rare insight into human nature. Here is an artist as fascinated by humanity as Nelson Keys. His American soldier soliloquy under the shadow of the Lincoln statue in Parliament Square, with faint gleams of humour that almost brought tears to the eyes, was as near perfection as anything seen in revue. Any actor capable of sounding such depths in a five-minute monologue should gladden the heart of his author. Peter Glenville, who is producing *The Time Of Your Life*, must have thought his year had started well when offered such a vital leading man.

Not content to play one part a night, Mr. Crisham has accepted the invitation to share the bill with Beatrice Lillie in *Better Late*, the smart nine o'clock revue

coming to the Duke of York's in March. Rehearsals start as soon as the Saroyan play has been launched. It is almost certain the *The Time Of Your Life* will transfer to the West-End after a week or two at Hammersmith, thereby enabling Mr. Crisham to make theatrical history.

He will be the first actor to star in two different plays at two different theatres on the same evening. Small part players in the past have rushed from Act I of one play to appear in Act III of another. Old-time music-hall stars used to work the Tivoli, the Bedford, and the Pavilion on the same night, but up to now no actor has played a full-length star part in two such contrasting productions as a serious play and a sophisticated revue on the same night. Few artists have sufficient versatility to take so much in their stride.

When people repeat the foolish old dictum about the theatre being dead, surely the presence of an artist with the talent, enthusiasm and versatility of a Crisham should silence them for all time. The greatest achievements of screen artists pale to insignificance before his proposed twice-nightly feat. I have no idea what books lie on Mr. Crisham's bedside table, but surely he must have been reading Browning's line, "*A man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's a heaven for?*"

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CICELY  
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as Jo Fox  
and  
HARTLEY  
POWER  
as Alec Dunne

# “Under the Counter”

CICELY Courtneidge gives the most brilliant performance of her career in this new comedy with music by Arthur Macrae. Here is a production that breaks away from the traditional musical comedy technique with the happiest result, for the music by Manning Sherwin to lyrics by Harold Purcell are an unobtrusive accompaniment to Mr. Macrae's witty dialogue which in no way hold up the action. Miss Courtneidge appears as Jo Fox, an actress of scintillating personality who

knows just how to acquire stockings and other feminine niceties by adroit 'under the counter' methods, but when she tries by similar means to get an old flame transferred from his military headquarters on the Continent to be near her in London, she encounters many obstacles. However, all is amicably sorted out by curtain fall. The play has a slick production by Jack Hulbert, who also arranged the dances with John Gregory, and the decor by Clifford Pember is very effective.







(Left)  
 n Garret calls  
 Jo Fox to try  
 interest her  
 some new num-  
 ers he has writ-  
 ten finds him-  
 self  
 taken up' by  
 girls who have  
 ne to Jo's house  
 rehearsal. In  
 picture Tim is  
 singing the  
 number, *No-one's  
 led to Kiss Me*  
 (Morley Walters  
 as Tim).

(Right)

Mike: And they swore  
 the flowers were  
 fresh.

Jo's old friend  
 arrives from the  
 Continent unex-  
 pectedly, with a  
 somewhat faded  
 bouquet. Jo is  
 still very much in  
 love with Mike  
 and wonders how  
 she can get him  
 to London to do  
 some producing  
 again. (Cyril Ray-  
 mond as Mike).



(Left)  
 Hello girls, here  
 I am.  
 arrives laden  
 'under the  
 counter' parcels  
 proceeds to  
 ignore Tim.

(Right)

Tim: You should  
 sing it conversation-  
 ally.

The persistent  
 young man, who  
 will not be re-  
 buffed, persuades  
 Jo to try out his  
 new number, *The  
 Moment I Saw  
 You*.



ective Inspector  
 er: I am from  
 Scotland Yard.  
 readful moment  
 Jo when she  
 overs the iden-  
 of the man  
 is draping  
 yards of  
 t silk. How-  
 the Inspector  
 only called  
 t a charity  
 ert, much to  
 Jo's relief.

ancis Roberts  
 as  
 (ector Baxter).

(Right)

Eva, the maid  
 (Winifred Hindle)  
 interrupts Tim  
 and Jo when they  
 are getting really  
 warmed up in  
 Tim's new number.







(Left)

Tim and Jo in the amusing 'Japan' finale of their duet. Incidentally, Jo has discovered that Tim is Private Secretary to Sir Alec Dunne, Cabinet Minister, and gets him to arrange a meeting, in the hope that the august man will pull some strings to get Mike back to England.

(Right)

Sir Alec: Who is going on in this house?

Lt. - Commander Hugo Conway R.N.V.R. (John Gregory), who is in charge of the dances for the new show, took out a few steps to the astonishment of Sir Alec.



(Left)

Sir Alec: I seem to be sitting on something hard.

Jo hides her jewellery under the cushion when Sir Alec calls, in the hope of making a more modest appeal, but she finds Sir Alec, a forthright gentleman from Canada, a tough proposition, though very susceptible to feminine charms.

(Right)

Sir Alec poses Elizabeth Arden. "Let's Get Ready to Glamour," the most clever attractive item of the show.







Another most effective moment from *Let's Get Back to Glamour*. Jo poses as Nelson in Trafalgar Square.



Jo: I am hungry I tell you.  
Jo is not impressed when Tim indulges in a demonstration love scene.



Mike: Hungry? Well—have a biscuit.  
Tim's rehearsal is rudely interrupted by Mike.



*Jo: I am nearly ready.*

Jo struggles into her boots for a rehearsal of one of the numbers in her new show.



Jo, complete with unruly headdress, gets ready for action in the Hungarian number, "Ai Yi Yi."



An amusing moment from the same number. Jo and Hugo have some trouble with their dance.





(Left)

Jo has overdone things in her effort to get Mike back to England. He is instead posted abroad, and is of course enraged at her interference. It is with the greatest difficulty that she averts this calamity. (Centre) Frederick Farley as Mr. Appleyard, an unpleasant official they take down a step or two, and Jeanne Stuart as Zoe, Mike's glamorous friend from Paris.



(Left)

Another moment towards the end of the play. Mr. Appleyard has a rough time at the hands of Jo's friends.

(Below)

The gay finale of the show. Sir Alec pairs up with Zoe, and Jo and Mike, after some stormy ups and downs, are together at last.





The famous Soviet ballerina, Ulanova, in *Cinderella*, Sergei Prokofiev's brilliant new ballet at the Moscow Bolshoi Theatre. (An exquisite model of the stage set for this ballet may be seen at the current Soviet Theatre Exhibition, at Dorland Hall, London).

## Soviet Ballet

BOOK REVIEW BY AUDREY WILLIAMSON

EYE-witness accounts of the ballet in Soviet Russia have been so few in England (Joan Lawson's excellent pamphlet, *Ballet in the U.S.S.R.*, published last year, constitutes almost the only informative literature on the subject) that the publication of Iris Morley's *Soviet Ballet* (Collins, 15s.) is of particular value.

Though not, like Miss Lawson, a dancer with a trained knowledge and (one gathers) very long experience of her subject, Miss Morley, who has constantly attended ballet performances in Moscow during the War, writes with a critical taste that gives that section of her text dealing with Soviet dancers a value above that of her own modest claim of "reporting." Her analysis of personalities and styles has the ring of truth even to those who, not having seen the dancers, cannot dispute the accuracy of her judgments. Certainly her opinion of two of the three great Soviet ballerinas is supported by the Soviet film *Two Ballerinas*, in which Ulanova dances the *Swan Lake* pas-de-deux with extraordinary poetic fluidity (her bird-like continuity of arm movement is something never seen in this country) and Lepeschinskaya a Spanish dance from *Don Quixote* with equally amazing flexibility and virtuosity of technique.

More than one report, as well as the brief glimpse afforded by this film, suggests that Ulanova is as possibly the greatest ballerina of her generation. Perfectly built, with the exquisitely proportioned limbs, slender ankle, finely curved calf and crescent-shaped foot of the *ballerina assoluta*, she is an outstanding technician (her eight final *rouettes* in the film *Swan Lake* confirm that) who is at the same time a dancer of

liquid grace and musicality and an actress, by report, of rare lyrical expression. "The thing about Ulanova's dancing," the ballet-master of the Bolshoi Theatre has said, "is this—you never see it happen. Only in one other dancer, in Nijinsky, have I seen a fluidity of movement comparable to hers. There is a movement, something wonderful happens, but you never see the intervening stage." Miss Morley herself classes her as "an actress of genius who has achieved a new medium for expressing the drama," and her description of Ulanova's *Giselle* does give us a flash of the quality of artistry, half intuitional, half intellectual, probably only Margot Fonteyn and Robert Helpmann possess in as high a degree in England to-day.

But Russia is a land which produces fine dancers not in single spies but in battalions. Dancing is in the nation's blood, and the delicate flower of Ulanova's genius (it is amazing to learn that she is haunted by the spectre of tuberculosis and at periods is too ill to dance) is complemented by the statuesque marble classicism of her senior, Semyonova, as well as a number of dancers who in England, Miss Morley affirms, would be hailed as *prima ballerinas*. Possibly there is some truth in her claim as to the technical superiority of Soviet to English dancers. They are the product of a school evolved from two centuries of tradition and giving them every physical and aesthetic advantage, including slow and unforced development and a careful shielding from the strain of overwork. Three or four performances a month is the average given by Ulanova; many more, in the dancer's

(Continued overleaf)



own words, "is impossible." Even allowing for Ulanova's own fragility the disparity with the number of weekly performances demanded of a leading dancer in England is staggering, and I think should be borne in mind in assessing the comparative qualities of English and Soviet soloists and corps-de-ballet.

Perhaps the most imminent problem facing English ballet companies to-day is the readjustment of balance between number of performances and physical capabilities. Already the sinister effect of wartime overwork has become apparent in a periodic breakdown of health among principal dancers, and it has long been obvious that a corps-de-ballet dancing its third consecutive *Swan Lake* (sometimes the second in one day) cannot possibly give a first-rate performance. Yet even so Miss Morley names Margot Fonteyn as "a fine ballerina by any standards"; a judgment borne out by at least one Soviet trained dancer who compares her in natural capabilities to Ulanova. It is necessary to emphasise this because the tendency to underrate English dancers is nonsensically exaggerated in certain ballet circles.

In writing on Soviet ballets Miss Morley shows, I think, some limitations of outlook and experience. Her acceptance of the Soviet choreographic style, which clings to the pre-Fokine formula of classic form and the 4-Act ballet, is too uncritical and complete, and her dismissal of English choreographers as merely "promising" on the grounds that "their powers have not yet undergone the test of the 4-Act ballet" shows an underrate of the mature achievement of an Ashton, Helpmann and de Valois which seems based on ignorance of Fokine's ballets and his influence on form and expression. That the 4-Act ballet does, in fact, strain the invention of even Soviet choreographers is shown by the general "falling off" in the last Act admitted by Miss Morley, and there seems little doubt the Fokine one-Act style has given ballet greater artistic cohesion.

Nevertheless it seems obvious that Soviet choreographers, in such works as *Romeo and Juliet* and *Fountain of Bakhchisarai*, can attain poetic and dramatic intensity of a high order; the ballets are vividly described and English balletgoers will be interested to note the deviations between English and Russian productions of the classics, as well as the amazing creativeness of English Ballet in wartime as compared to the Soviet, which ceased production of new works. Although Soviet dancers are rarely photographed Miss Morley has gathered together a fine selection of "action" photographs, which at their best can reveal the movement and style of the dancers more vividly than professional "stills." I would instance Plates XIV and XIII as particularly lovely examples.

# Soviet Theatre No. 21

## Lillian Hellman's "Little Foxes" on the Moscow Stage

LILLIAN Hellman's plays have aroused a great deal of interest in Moscow this year. *Watch on the Rhine* is being played at the Lenin Komsomol Theatre under the title *The Farelly Family Loses its Peace of Mind* (directed by Serafima Birman); and *Little Foxes* is now enjoying a successful run at the Moscow Theatre of Drama in Elena Starodomskaia's production.

K. Pelovnikov in the role of Regina gives a downright cynical interpretation and her acting is so powerful and gripping that despite a somewhat schematized role she succeeds in making it original and realistic.

Birdie Hubbard, wife of Regina's brother, is in striking contrast to Regina. Faina Ranevskaya in this role brings out Birdie's generosity and kindness which make her the very opposite of the cynical and greedy Regina. Life stops for Birdie the day the trees on her beloved family estate are cut down. Her husband's family has turned out to be a pack of wolves ready to tear each other to bits for every piece of booty. Birdie is a positive character only insofar as she serves as a denial of this predatory code of ethics. Socially and psychologically she is a person broken by life, a bit of wreckage.

Regina's husband, Horatio and daughter Alexandra offer the same passive protest. As Alexandra V. Orlova gives an entrancing performance.

The stage decors by V. Rindina who together with the cast, has tried to reproduce the national peculiarities of the place and people, are executed with great taste and charm.

\* \* \*

In the cruel and cynical struggle between members of one family one cannot help recalling the words of the Negro servant girl which sound like the voice of conscience: "There are people who eat the earth and eat all the people on it. Then there are people who stand around and watch them at it. Sometimes I think it isn't right—to stay and watch them do it."

## "Cinderella"

A full review of Sergei Prokofiev's new ballet "Cinderella" will appear in our March issue, with illustrations sent from Moscow. Nikolai Volkov, the well-known Soviet dramatist, is the author of this review. It was M. Volkov, incidentally who suggested to the composer the subject of the old story of "Cinderella," and himself wrote the scenario used.



On the island of Zante in the fourteenth century, Antony, the great Abbot of Santa Ferrata, meditates on a mountain while his three companions live in a cell.  
(Robert Speaight as Antony and Eric Shilling, Norman Tyrrell and Frank Napier as the novices).

## “*This Way to the Tomb*”

AT THE MERCURY

● *THIS Way to the Tomb*, the second of the new plays by poets produced by E. Martin Browne, at the Mercury Theatre (which will always be linked in the memory with T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*), evoked considerable interest among the critics. The author, Ronald Duncan, shows great skill in this, his first endeavour, and the music by Benjamin Britten, ranging from a Latin psalm to satirical songs and jazz, in which a choir of sixteen is used, is a notable feature of the production.

The play takes the form of a masque, set in the fourteenth century, and an anti-masque of the twentieth century, the central character being St. Antony of Santa Ferrata. In the first part the saint struggles with doubt, loneliness and temptation as the price of faith; the second, modern part, is a satirical exposure of this materialistic age. The two are linked when the saint appears as an old man and three of the moderns, reincarnations of his fourteenth century companions, recognise him.

The author's poetry displays some unusual forms and technique, and there is humour and strong satire. The interpretation of the actors is splendid throughout.

The repertory season ends on February 2nd, but *This Way to the Tomb* will return to the Mercury on February 11th for an unlimited run, after a special week at the Arts Theatre, Cambridge.

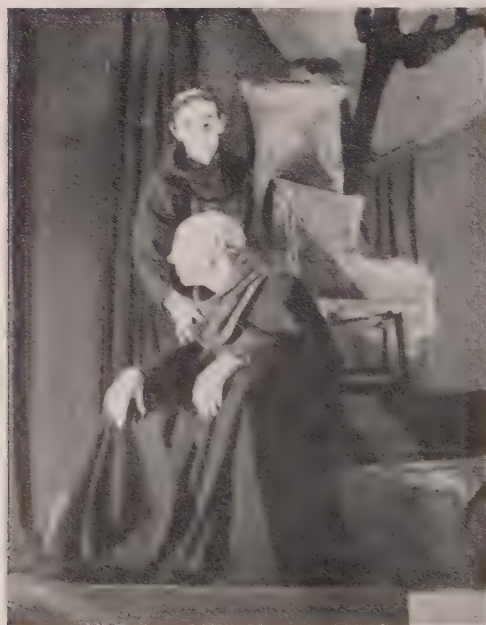
PHOTOS: PICTORIAL PRESS, LONDON





**Part  
I**

Temptations come to Antony, who has abdicated from his powerful position to abase himself as a desert hermit; the first being Gluttony (Edward Huberman), who offers the Sacrament as food.



The last Temptation is Pride, in the form of Bernard Frank Napier, who has been Antony's closest companion



*"All the diversity of a city street walks and talks in the bazaar within my brain."*  
Antony in Temptation.



## Part II

The scene is the same island to-day. An American 'hot gosseller,' Phillippa Form (Pamela Alan), comes with Father Opine (Frank Napier) to visit the saint's tomb. The Announcer is Stuart Latham.



And so I formed the Astral group and went ahead . . . Phillippa Form tells the Philipinos how she came to form her Astral Group.



Father Opine, the director of the Astral Group, whose objective is to exchange Reason for Faith, gives a Freudian explanation of the saint's life.





The novices of the Group, Mobile Worker (Gwen Nelson), Girl Leisure (Eleanor Summerfield), and Man of Culture (Dave Pruen) confess their fears before the saint's tomb at 11.40 p.m.



Antony appears at midnight by a miracle, and is set upon and knocked down by the Astral Group.



Among the model visitors are three who recognise Antony, for they are the reincarnations of his three companions. The play ends with the sharing of a meal while in the background is heard the *Gloria*, composed by Benjamin Britten for unaccompanied choir (Eric Shilling as Percussion, Norman Tyrn as the Postcard Seller, Robert Speaight as Antony and Frank Napier as Father Opine).

# Whispers from the Wings

BY  
LOOKER ON

AS I told Nora Swinburne in her dressing-room the other night, I think actors are too frequently patted on the back for doing no more than their job. For over a year she has been giving a beautifully restrained and warm-hearted performance in *The Years Between* at Wyndham's, as the wife whose "missing" husband suddenly returns from the war to find time has worked a complete transformation on the life he left behind. There are no fireworks, but for all that, it is a fine piece of emotional acting. After twelve months Miss Swinburne is to be congratulated. She has prevented the drab routine of a long run from dimming a radiant performance.

"I don't know how you do it every night, Nora!" remarked a young friend who had slipped round to pay her respects. I admit the inevitable boredom attached to routine work, but why should the actress be singled out for special mention? What about the clerk who has to balance a dreary ledger every day, without adequate salary, or so much as a kind word? His "long run" lasts for the duration of his life. Surely the cases are parallel and it is unfair to isolate the actress for special praise.

Miss Swinburne begged to differ. "Both have routine jobs," she agreed, "but it is more difficult for the actor to keep fresh, his more nervous exhaustion is entailed. So much is expected of him. He dare not relax for a moment, or it becomes apparent to the audience and lets the play down. When the clerk comes to the office with a splitting headache he can take things slowly and quietly, and still get through his work, even though it may take longer than usual.

"The actor cannot take things quietly on the stage. Several hundred people have paid hard-earned money to see his performance. They are sitting out there, concentrating upon his slightest gesture, and, quite rightly, they want value for money. They have not paid to see a sick man walk indifferently through his part. He must pull himself together and give the best possible performance, which is not always easy. He cannot walk off in the middle of his work and leave others to share his duties between them. Rather than disappoint the public, I have seen actors play when they have been racked with stomach pains or dizzy with a bilious attack.

"Welcome as it is to the artist, a long run presents many problems. After a show has been on for some time there is a great tendency to play it too slowly. The artist settles down to improve his part. In wondering what can be done to perfect it, he often tries to make much of details that are really quite unimportant—little bits of



NORA SWINBURNE

business, or the particular way of delivering a line. Such over-elaboration of unnecessary detail is apt to drag out the playing-time and the whole production suffers in consequence. The producer should slip in from time to time and see the show.

"Long runs are not really good experience for beginners. In the early days of my career I was in a number of shows that each ran for a year—*The Pat*, *In The Next Room*, *Murder On The Second Floor*, and *Number Seventeen*. It was all very pleasant, of course, but it is more beneficial for a youngster to play a larger number of parts than five in five years.

"On the other hand, long runs have their advantage. It is good for an artist to be associated with a success. When it runs in the West-End for a year it establishes his reputation in the minds of thousands of people who see the play. He becomes "a name," whereas he is apt to escape widespread public attention when he appears in a rapid succession of short runs, no matter how brilliantly he figures in them. There is an age-old saying about jobs being easy to get when you are in work.

"Each artist has his own pet tricks for overcoming the boredom of a long run. Just as I get a certain kick out of changing the brand of my cigarettes, I like to vary my make-up during a run, and experiment with a new hair-do. It is good to change the playing-tempo of a scene—to speed it up now and again and note the effect on the audience and on one's fellow players. Above all, one should try and rest just before the show. It is disastrous to arrive at the theatre to play a part which is beginning to pall, when one is feeling tired and irritable. It is unfair to the public and only renders one's job unnecessarily distasteful."





Portrait by Tunbridge-Sedgwick

## **Pamela Brown**

Pamela Brown will be leading lady of the Old Vic Bristol Company, which opens at the Theatre Royal, Bristol, on February 19th, with Farquhar's *The Beaux Stratagem*. Other plays to be given are a new play by J. B. Priestley, entitled *Jenny Villiers*, Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, Chekhov's *The Seagull*, and Dryden's *All for Love*. The leading man is William Devlin, and the resident producer is Hugh Hunt. Miss Brown has been appearing for the Company of Four at the Lyric,

Hammersmith, in Jan 'de Hartog's *Death of a Rat*.

# Echoes from Broadway

BY OUR  
AMERICAN  
CORRESPONDENT

E.  
MAWBY  
GREEN

(Right)

Betty Field and Helen  
Marcy in Elmer Rice's  
new play *Dream Girl*,  
which has received an  
enthusiastic welcome.

(Photograph by Van-  
dam Studio)



It was left to Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse to dig into their hit-bag and pull out the first unanimous success of the season: *State Of The Union*, which they co-authored and gave to Leland Hayward to produce. Previously the combined Lindsay and Crouse wit had gone into the writing of the non-stop *Life With Father* and the producing of such diversified entertainments as *Arsenic and Old Lace* and *The Hasty Heart*. In *State Of The Union* they are taking two seemingly irreconcilable elements, politics and passion, and are appealing to everybody's delight that they're not such strange bedfellows.

The politics are presented in the grooming of Grant Matthews (Ralph Bellamy), a prominent airplane manufacturer with a burning honesty that attracts the masses in much the same way that the late Wendell Willkie did, for the Republican nomination for the President of the United States in 1948. The passion pops up in the form of the prospective candidate's estranged wife (Ruth Hussey), who for appearance's sake, is persuaded to accompany her husband on a speech making tour of the country which eventually leads to her supplanting per-

manently "the other woman" (Kay Johnson), owner of an influential string of newspapers, who, in between going to press, had crept into Grant's adjoining twin bed. This double-barrelled plot has been discharged deftly and with great good humour. There is enormous fascination in watching the behind-the-scene workings of the political machinery that sets up Grant Matthews for the party's own selfish ends and a stirring climax in Grant's upsetting of their plans when he refuses to "play politics" when the party is put above the needs and wants of the people and the country.

Ruth Hussey, whose loveliness has been confined to the cinema these past eight years, is a stunning asset to *State Of The Union* making the part of the wife warm, wonderful and witchy. Ralph Bellamy wins the confidence of his playgoing constituents with his ingratiating sincerity and no less right in their respective districts are Kay Johnson, Minor Watson and Miron McCormick. Bretaigue Windust directed with an equally inspired enthusiasm and there are four handsome settings by Raymond Sovey.

(Continued overleaf)



Elmer Rice has bounced back on top again with his new comedy *Dream Girl*. So enthusiastic has been the reception that a run as remunerative as his theatrically sound *Street Scene* and *Counsellor-At-Law* is pretty much assured. Other plays of his which we believe fared better in London than here were *The Left Bank*, *See Naples And Die*, *Between Two Worlds* and *Judgment Day*.

A most welcome feature of *Dream Girl* is that Mr. Rice has finally overcome the habit of letting his political leanings corrupt his plays. It is a real delight to again see him swinging wholeheartedly on the side of comedy and playing his characters solely for pleasure. Possibly doing time in Hollywood has done this to him. If so, we must revise slightly our contention that the movies serve only to make wealthy monkeys out of playwrights. Furthermore, Mr. Rice has adopted a screen technique for the telling of his story that is unusually successful. Using a triple turn-table device, he starts his tale with his *Dream Girl* on the centre table, in bed. In between getting out of the sheets and into her shower, she talks back to the radio program that is offering advice, giving us an insight into her own befuddled mind. Shifting from turn-table to turn-table, flashes of her complex life are revealed along with the fantastically distorted dream versions. This particular morning, she believes herself in love with her sister's husband. He has become the hero in the book she has written, which is constantly rejected by the publishers but flatteringly upheld by him. She is part owner of an unprofitable little book shop that possibly could make a few cents if they had enough copies of the current sex-shocker "Always Opal." A book reviewer (Wendell Corey) drops in to dispose of some books (Reviewer's copies) for cash, and lets slip his own opinion of her unpublished manuscript. Ruffled by his unfavourable criticism of it, she goes to keep a cocktail-luncheon date with a fast-working book jobber, who invites her to Mexico to outgrow her virginal status. Here she dreams herself on to a "kept" balcony in Mexico, tossing a favour to a romantic Guitar strummed below, with a face resembling that of the aggravating book reviewer. Back to earth in the book shop she is talked into taking an Italian dinner and attending the openings of *The Merchant Of Venice*, all with that "despicable" book reviewer. She had played Portia in a college production so at the theatre she submits to another dream-wave and we see her substituting for the imaginary indisposed star. By 4.00 a.m. the fog has lifted from her mind and she is back in bed again, but with that aggressively attractive book reviewer. She is telephoning her mother

(Evelyn Varden) she won't be home—she just got married instead.

Betty Field is sharing a triumph as great as her playwright husband, Mr. Rice, for her portraying of his *Dream Girl*. Miss Field was unable to appear the night we attended, so we caught the understudy, Helen Marcy, who did admirably under the circumstances, but left us curious to go back and see how much more enjoyment Miss Field with her vibrant and colourful style of acting could wring from this comedy. Certainly it is a part that will have many actresses crazy to do on the London stage, where *Dream Girl* is unquestionably destined to duplicate its American success. Paramount has tied-up the picture rights as well as financing the Broadway production, which is being presented by the Playwrights' Company, of which Mr. Rice is a member. Mr. Rice has also ably directed and the skeleton settings of Jo Mielziner are remarkable for their quick change of mood and blending of atmosphere.

Robert E. Sherwood, another member of The Playwrights' Company, who had been occupied in Washington where it is said he assisted the late President Roosevelt with his speeches, returned to the Broadway scene after five years, with *The Rugged Path*. Starring in this backward glance at the war years is Spencer Tracy as Morey Vinion, liberal newspaper man, who, sick of warning die-hard isolationists of what is coming and tired of fighting the business department of his newspaper which caters to these isolationists, joins the navy and through his shipmates and a small band of native Philippine guerillas finds an inner peace when he learns why the cause of freedom is worth fighting and dying for. Mr. Tracy, whose last appearance on the New York stage was in *The Last Mile* in 1930, has found a fine tailor-made part which he acts with effortless ease and ringing sincerity although the play has earned the uncompimentary epithets "dull," "episodic" and "preachy." However, the Tracy magnetism is packing the Plymouth theatre—but only for a short while since he is due back on the coast to make more moving pictures.

Upon being discharged from the army where he was Major Maurice Evans in charge of soldier entertainment in the Central Pacific area, the eminent actor signed up with producer Mike Todd to star in *Hamlet*, the version which the G.I.'s acclaimed. Before the war he had treated us to our greatest Shakespearian experience—Margaret Webster's production of the full length *Hamlet*. To back Mr. Evans up in his new venture came the men who served with him in the Pacific: George Schaeffer, director of the production, Frederick Stover, designer of the settings and Roger Adams, composer of the musical score. Together they have put on a stunning, fast-moving,

the-man tragedy. There are no phoney academic hair splittings, no preciousnesses and no absurd posturings here. Every motive is clearly defined, straightforwardly presented—and it is a pleasure to have it so.

Mr. Evans, who is a constant source of amazement—and pleasure, is absolutely superb in the title role. He amazes in that physically he seems so wrong for the role of a Shakespearian actor. He is short, pudgy, pleasant-looking and totally unimpressive. If you were a casting agent, you'd probably set him down as a second lead for a drawing room comedy. But the moment he appears on stage and speaks his first words, he towers and soars along with the Shakespearian verse.

His Hamlet is a gentleman and a genius, a bitter and revengeful man of action in the seething corruption of the court. He completely dominates every scene, perhaps more than he should, due to the general weakness of his supporting cast. Lili Darvas and Thomas Gomez seem bewildered by their respective roles of Gertrude and Claudius. Thomas Chalmers is an amusing and pompous wooer for Hamlet as Polonius while Frances Reid is gentle and appealing as Ophelia, being particularly effective in the mad scenes as most Ophelias are.

In deference to the G.I.'s who found the gravedigger scene old-fashioned, Mr. Evans has eliminated it with nary a critic's voice raised in complaint. However it rather awkwardly rushes the end of the tragedy putting Hamlet to duel with Laertes almost before he gets off the boat. But the final scene is the most exciting we've ever witnessed and more than makes amends for the broken story line.

All true tragedies "occur out of time and place" and the truth of this has been emphasized by the brilliant Frederick Stover settings and lovely Irene Sharaff costumes which place the tragedy in a Middle European kingdom sometime in the 19th century. This change of period changes nothing but the phrase "something's rotten in the state of Denmark."

Another distinguished revival, well-received by press and public and assured of selling out for its limited eight week engagement, is George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* with Gertrude Lawrence and Raymond Massey in the starring roles of Eliza Doolittle and Henry Higgins, which is being offered as its first production by a new non-profit organization, Theatre Incorporated. It is an auspicious beginning for this new producing firm with its laudable aim of giving Broadway a series of plays chosen from among the literature of enduring drama with the most distinguished artists available in New York."

Still recalling vividly the utter perfection of the British motion picture version of *Pygmalion* with Wendy Hiller and Leslie Howard, we found this latest version a little



Vandamm

MAURICE EVANS as Hamlet

less than completely satisfying. As the cockney flower girl scrubbed and polished to pass as a duchess, Miss Lawrence is not triumphant in the way we usually expect Miss Lawrence to triumph. She has surprised everyone by approaching her first role in a modern classic with great restraint and repose. Very quietly and steadily she goes about creating and moulding Eliza into a human portrait. This is indeed quite a shock for us who have seen her save inferior little comedies by turning them into a one-woman circus with her boundless energy and vivid personality. As the supremely selfish phonetics professor, Henry Higgins, Raymond Massey may have been the best actor available for the part but he is certainly not the ideal actor for this difficult role. Never a very happy choice in a drawing room or a comedy since he lacks grace and charm, Mr. Massey finds himself in the unhappy position of making Prof. Higgins unpleasantly boorish. Melville Cooper leaves his mark as the dustman father of Eliza who inherits enough money to be plagued by middle class morality and Cecil Humphreys as Colonel Pickering, Katherine Emmet as Mrs. Higgins and Anita Bolster as Mrs. Pearce, the housekeeper, are exceptionally capable. Cedric Hardwicke has staged *Pygmalion* with intelligence and graciousness while Donald Oenslager has designed three rich and impressive period settings.

The high value that the commercial Broadway theatre places on craftsmanship is too painfully clear in its treatments of

(Continued overleaf)



*Strange Fruit*, the play Lillian Smith fashioned with her sister Esther from her somber, powerful and best-selling novel. Unwieldy in its construction, burdened with unnecessary bit parts and therefore a little difficult to follow, *Strange Fruit* still manages to strike the stage with fury as it tells the poignant and tragic love of a white boy for a coloured girl and the terrifying outcome which leads to murder and the lynching of an innocent Negro. Written with deep understanding and dripping with a disturbing authenticity *Strange Fruit* is finding little box-office response while an artificial melodrama on a similar theme, slickly presented, *Deep Are The Roots* (reviewed in an earlier issue) is still playing to capacity audiences.

Joseph Fields and Jerome Chodorov, authors of *My Sister Eileen* and *Junior Miss*, have failed to duplicate their usual success in their latest comedy *The French Touch*. In spite of the fact that the scene is Paris, the characters Frenchmen, the director the famous Rene Clair and two authentic accents decorate the cast, there is nothing Gallic about *The French Touch*. It is a straight-punching, wise-cracking comedy that peters out and winds up as flat as American champagne. Brian Aherne is featured as Roubland, a much-married actor-playwright-producer-director a la Sacha Guitry and Arlene Francis plays opposite him as his first wife. Together they try to outsmart the Nazis, in particular the Nazi minister of culture, Felix won Brenner (John Wengraf). Though they annihilate him in the play, Mr. Wengraf managed to rise from his cold theatrical grave to swipe all the notices. It had been announced before *The French Touch* came to New York that London would also see the play with Godfrey Tearle and Coral Browne in the leading roles. Two brilliant performances could conceivably turn the play into a merry romp but the Broadway production never got this chance.

John van Druten, with two hits running on Broadway: *The Voice Of The Turtle* and *I Remember Mama*, tried to make it three with *The Mermaids Singing* but discovered the siren song can go sour. He is discussing urbanely the extra-marital problem of the middle-aged, successful playwright Clement Waterlow (Walter Abel)

who meets an attractive young thing of twenty (Beatrice Pearson) while out-of-town with his new play. They discuss sex freely and casually for three acts and decide to do nothing about it when Waterlow realizes his "treat" might bring on him all the inconveniences of love. That's pretty thin ice to skate on for three acts and unfortunately Mr. van Druten gets too close to the danger sign. He loses control of his characters and ends up by just letting them talk themselves out while his audience fondly reflect how nice it might have been if Waterlow were allowed his "treat" at the end of Act Two.

A new war play, *Home Of The Brave* by Arthur Laurents, a dramatic case history of a young Jewish soldier suffering from nerve shock and his subsequent treatment and cure by an army psychiatrist has received notices ranging from favourable to rave from the New York critics and it will be interesting to watch how the public responds to this brave offering of producer Lee Sabinson. Twelve months ago a success would have been assured but the public's taste seems to have changed considerably since V.J. Day. Another war play, *A Sound Of Hunting*, by Harry Brown, author of the novel "A Walk in the Sun" and the amusing sketches "Artie Greengroin, P.F.C.," failed to make the grade earlier on.

That droll man, Charles Butterworth, is back on Broadway in *Brighten The Corner* by John Cecil Holm, author of the unforgettable farce *Three Men On A Horse*. The new play has an old plot—the farcical difficulties a young married couple encounter in finageling a large wedding check from an eccentric uncle (Charles Butterworth) when the latter assumes another woman to be the wife. However if you forget the plot, which is quite easy with a likeable comedian like Mr. Butterworth around, there are plenty of giggles to be drawn from the amusing dialogue.

Gilbert Miller has Judith Evelyn starring for three weeks in a sentimental drama *The Rich Full Life*, by Vina Delmar, author of *Bad Girl*. Written for the matinee cry-in-your-handkerchief trade, the play succeeded on that level and rose considerably higher in Miss Evelyn's brilliant characterization of the hard, dull life of the typical middle-class American housewife.

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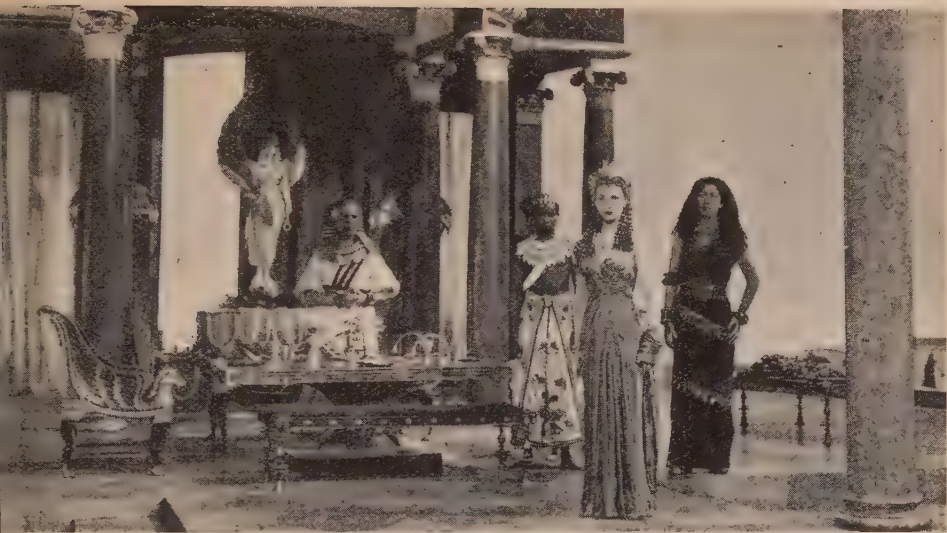
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## Seen on the Films



In the past few months British films have come into their own, and it has been possible to see an astonishing number of our leading stage stars on the screen in the West End. Above: A scene from the British technicolour version of Bernard Shaw's *Cæsar and Cleopatra*, at the Odeon, Marble Arch. Miss Wither is seen as Cleopatra with right, Flora Robson as Ftatateeta. We hope soon to see Miss Wither again on the West End stage in *The Skin of Our Teeth*.



Miss Wither as the villainess in the film of *Pink String and Yellow Wax*. Miss Wither is now playing in *Private Lives*.



A scene from the delightful film *I Know Where I am Going*, showing Roger Livesey, Wendy Hiller (who is now playing at the Savoy in *The First Gentleman*), and Jean Cadell.



## Channel Islands Theatres To-day

by B. C. de Guerin

**A**LTHOUGH Liberation brought relief to the Channel Islands in many ways, it has not yet been found possible to meet the desire of the islanders for professional theatrical shows, and so they have been forced to revive some of those companies which were formed during the German Occupation and which did such good work in keeping up the spirits of the rest of the population.

In Jersey, the Green Room Club have put on Terence Rattigan's *Flare Path*, with Richard Whinnett producing and taking a lead.

Two of Guernsey's wartime companies combined to produce a cast selected from the "Amherstians" and the "Sarnian Players" for Norman Armstrong's *Life-line*. Production was by W. J. de Carteret, who also took a minor part.

Variety has also had its turn, and an excellent cast was got together by Peter Campbell from among "Occupation" favourites and returned "evacuees," some of the latter having gained useful professional and broadcasting experience during the war.

A company new to the Channel Islands, though not to many of the inhabitants who were deported to Germany, is the "Bats," or "Biberach Amateur Theatri-

cal Society," which, now that the members have returned to their island homes, is to give a revival of two of the productions that served to while away the weary hours of internment in Germany. These will be the farce *Just Married* and the musical comedy *Wild Violets*, and the producers and leading players are Mr. and Mrs. John Sinclair.

The islands also look forward to a visit from a company sponsored by Billy Lynn and Alva Harding who, before the war, lived on Guernsey, but have since put in five years touring their own cast for ENSA in all parts of the world.

Alderney, previously known as the "Cinderella of the Channel Islands," has lost that title so far as entertainment is concerned, as the Germans left behind them a completely furnished and up-to-date cinema-theatre, of which full use will be made as the island becomes resettled.

Sark, on the other hand, is finding it difficult to organise any form of theatricals and, although visited spasmodically by entertainers from Guernsey, is anxious to revive the excellent little Amateur Dramatic Society which did such good work on the island before the war. As an initial step, a series of social evenings are being held to raise funds.

**OFFERS** invited. "Theatre World," Nos. 1-89, unbound, "Play Pictorial," Vols. 1-45, bound and "Stage Year Book," 1908-1920. Write Joyce, 14, Lincolnholt Mansions, London, W.6.

**FOR SALE.** "Theatre World," Nos. 1 to 101, 1925/1933. Cover missing from Part 1, all others in excellent condition. Also 27 copies "Play Pictorial," Nos. 271, 273, 275, 277, 279, 280, 282, 285, 286, 288/292, 294, 296, 297, 308, 312, 314/319, 326, 328. Highest offer secures. Wilson, 15, The Avenue, Loughton, Essex.

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## Amateur Stage

### Notes and Topics

**T**O attend the final performances of the  
dramatic competition organised by the  
London Union of Girls' Clubs was to  
receive a most heartening proof of the  
enthusiasm and ability with which the  
young people of London are tackling their  
stage work. The final, on January 16th,  
at Cripplegate, consisted of three societies  
in the mixed groups section, and they  
faced Mr. Maurice Colbourne as the adjud-  
icator.

In placing them in the following winning  
order, Mr. Colbourne was undoubtedly  
right in his assessment, and the audience  
showed their appreciation of the award.  
First, Handsworth Youth Club in *Christ-  
mas In The Market Place*; second, Harles-  
den Youth Fellowship in *Michael*; third,  
Golders Green Jewish Youth Club in  
a scene from *Berkeley Square*. There  
could be no disputing that order of merit,  
and it will be doing justice to all con-  
cerned if, while warmly acknowledging  
their spirited playing, some minor points  
of technique are elaborated here.

The winning play is charming and  
moving, but a little too long. A few  
minutes cut would emphasise its appeal.  
Its idea of a group of gipsies staging a  
nativity in the market square, against a  
caravan background, is very responsive to  
simple staging with a minimum of scenery.  
One little point for the young girl who  
played the angel, a beautiful piece of  
work. Act all the time on the stage, even  
a pace or two into the wings. In your  
last two steps off you ceased to be that  
angelic messenger who won our hearts, and  
became Miss Anyone of London Town. A  
little more speed from the prompter would  
have helped one dry-up.

Tolstoy's *Michael* has an old-fashioned  
air to its construction, but it offers  
opportunities. This production lost a  
little in variety of pace and emphasis,  
while the accents of some players were  
nearer to Harlesden than Russia.

The Club tackling the *Berkeley Square*  
scene gave themselves the hardest task.  
To wear eighteenth century costume, with  
its sense of style and mannerisms, is not  
easy and this group were hardly equal to  
it. Yet their playing did not lack spirit  
or attack; they have that best of all stage  
qualifications, the confidence to feel emo-  
tion and to portray it. One or two of the  
men fidgeted with their wigs, while some  
period gestures were not wholehearted  
enough. Here again, accents were removed  
from the time, and place, but this com-  
pany in another play will have to be  
reckoned with in future competitions.

Altogether, an evening to reassure the doubters about the cinema's grip on our young people—our theatre has a good chance.

\* \* \*

Croydon Operatic and Dramatic Association have *Macbeth* in view for May production, and are seeking an amateur actor for the title role. Rehearsals are held at Croydon, and an audition is planned for February 12th. Any Shakespearean amateur who is interested should write first to Mr. G. Turner, 38, Monahan Avenue, Purley.

\* \* \*

The Baintree Shakespeare Players (pupils of the Senior Boys' School, Baintree) are producing their tenth Shakespeare production, *The Taming of the Shrew*, in February. Details of the performances are: Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th February; Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, 20th, 21st, 22nd, 23rd February, all at 7 p.m.; afternoon performances: Saturday, 16th February, Thursday, 21st February, Saturday, 23rd February, all at 2.30 p.m. The first performance of *The Taming of the Shrew* will be the 116th performance of Shakespeare on the Baintree Players' stage.

\* \* \*

Amateur players should not miss the opportunity of going along to Dorland Hall, London, to see the Soviet Theatre exhibition, which ends on February 28th. It is an astonishing fact that in 1939 the number of amateur drama clubs in the U.S.S.R. reached 95,600. There is, of course, a much closer link between the amateur and professional stage in the Soviet Union, and the prevailing system is worth studying. The clubs are based in factories and collective farms, Red Army and Navy units, and many of them are coached by professional producers. In 1945, a Home Talents Festival was organised for the encouragement of amateur art among the young people of vocational training schools all over the country, which culminated in displays by the best performers in a Moscow Festival. The amateur stage in the Soviet Union receives every encouragement because it is considered that the movement raises the ethical standard of audiences besides often providing recruits for the professional stage.

\* \* \*

## Correction

We are asked to point out that the repertory company at Castle Theatre, Barnham, mentioned last month, is a fully professional group, and not amateur.

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# As We Go to Press

"**GOLDEN Eagle**," a new play by Clifford Bax, opened at the Westminster, on January 29th. The central character, Mary Queen of Scots, played by Claire Luce, is portrayed as a charming, brilliant and highly sexed Royal widow, whose ambitions and love life come into severe conflict. Torin Thatcher appears as the Earl of Bothwell, David Read as Darnley, Arthur Wontner as Lettington, David Horne as Morton, John Byron as Rizzio, Townsend Whiting as Ruthven, David Enders as Duncan, Ann Farrer as Mary Carmichael, and Mary Honer as Mary Beaton. The production is by Robert Atkins, the costumes and scenery by Gower Parks, and music composed by Sir Arnold Bax.

With this play, Anmer Hall returns to personal management at his own Westminster Theatre.

\* \* \*

Unity Theatre, after having maintained its performances (though limited) throughout the war period, returned to a full schedule of six performances a week on Boxing Day with Ted Willis's *God Bless the Guvnor*, an uproarious festive skit (after Mrs. Henry Wood!), sub-titled 'A Moral Warning against the Twin Evils of Trade Unionism and Strong Drink.'

The Unity takes a big new step in February, when amateur shows will be abandoned for some time, and the new Unity Theatre professional repertory company is opening with O'Neill's *All God's Chillun Got Wings*. Robert Adams, the negro actor, is appearing with the company, as is also Ida Shepley, the well-known negress singer and actress.

\* \* \*

Diana Wynyard, Ronald Squire, and Hugh Williams will appear in *Portrait in Black*, a play by Ivan Goff and Ben Roberts, to be directed by Mr. Squire. The play has a present-day setting in San Francisco, and Roger Furse will be responsible for the decor. *Portrait in Black* will be one of the first H. M. Tennent productions of the New Year.

\* \* \*

Several readers have, quite rightly, written to point out that in the review of outstanding productions of 1945, included last month, no mention was made of the Haymarket repertory season. Actually, of course, the season commenced in 1944, and full tribute was paid in our review of that year, twelve months ago, in the January, 1945, issue, when John Gielgud's *Hamlet* was given very special mention. Subsequent 1945 productions should, however, have been mentioned last month, particularly *The Duchess of Malfi*, an exquisite production which saw some outstanding acting from John Gielgud, Peggy Ashcroft, Leslie Banks and Cecil Truncer.

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